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Research Article

"Can You Teach English? Hontou?": A Trioethnography of "Freak" Teachers Translanguaging for Social Justice in Japan

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In this trioethnography, we, three East Asian women and English educators in Japan, explore how we draw on our intersectional identities to practice translanguaging for social justice in our teaching. Due to our social locations, we have been perceived as "freaks" in our institutions, in which the ideal English teacher is often assumed to be a White man from an Inner Circle country. We make use of the concept of translingual identity-as-pedagogy to inquire into possibilities, as it offers a means through which educators can draw on the epistemic affordances of marginalized identities to expand student learning. This stance towards non-normative experiences can offer students new perspectives and strategies for resisting hegemonic monolingual and monocultural ideologies. In this way, we can turn our translingual repertoires into pedagogical resources for social justice. Through iterative analysis of our narratives and dialogue, we found that our translanguaging was full of risks to our professional credibility and status, and it involved emotion labor as we regulated our feelings of guilt, anxiety, and vulnerability whenever we elected to draw on our rich translingual repertoire. Meanwhile, our "freak" identities allowed us to disrupt the myth of homogeneity and contest raciolinguistic ideologies, carving out spaces outside of a binaristic narrative. We turned our "freak" identities into translingual pedagogy, such as integrating topics of diversity in the classroom, practicing art-based pedagogy to create a collaborative and trusting environment, and questioning native-speakerism and the myth of "perfect" English. Our translingual identity-as-pedagogy demonstrates that "freak" identities enable resistance to raciolinguistic ideologies and facilitation of pedagogical translanguaging for social justice.

Keywords: translanguaging; translingual identity-as-pedagogy; social justice; trioethnography

1. INTRODUCTION

This trioethnography explores how three racialized East Asian teachers of English in Japan draw on our intersectional identities to practice translanguaging for social justice. In Japan, native-speakerism is still dominant in English language education, privileging speakers from so-called "Inner Circle" countries (Inoue & Anderson, 2023). In addition, the myth of homogeneity in Japan, which perpetuates a monolithic racial, ethnic,

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cultural, and national Japanese identity, remains dominant, suppressing voices from those with hybrid identities (Hammine & Rudolph, 2023; Rudolph, 2023). In this context, we[1], as three non-Japanese Asian teachers of English, do not comfortably fit within the binary of native-English-speaking and Japanese teachers of English. We are invisible in the binary, and we have felt at times like we were "freaks," because our identities did not align with the image of the ideal and desirable English teacher in Japan.

Rather than succumbing to invisibilization and marginalization, we draw on our transnational and translingual identities for our translanguaging for social justice in Japan. Employing translingual identity-as-pedagogy (Jain, 2022; Motha et al., 2012) as our theoretical framework, we collaboratively reflect on, (re)interpret, and analyze how we use our "freak" hybrid identities as resistance options for our students to contest deficit monolingual and monocultural ideologies and how we mobilize our translingual experiences and repertoire for translanguaging for social justice. Specifically, we explore these research questions through dialogue: (a) What are the risks and affordances of translanguaging for us as "freak" and invisibilized foreign English teachers in Japan, where White male Inner Circle (Kachru, 1992) status is the norm?; and (b) How do our experiences as "freak" and invisibilized foreign teachers inform our translanguaging and enrich our pedagogical translanguaging for social justice? In what follows, we first situate our trioethnography in the scholarship of native-speakerism and translanguaging, and transnational teacher identities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: DISRUPTING NATIVE-SPEAKERISM IN JAPAN THROUGH TRANSLINGUAL IDENTITY-AS-PEDAGOGY

Native-speakerism, the ideology that so-called native English speakers (NESs) are more qualified to teach English to non-native English speakers (NNESs) of English, is still pervasive in Japanese higher education (Inoue & Anderson, 2023). NESs are thought to have intuitive proficiency in English and a birthright to the language (Dovchin & Wang, 2024). Despite robust criticism against native-speakerism, the dichotomy between NES and NNES influences hiring practices (Oda, 2022), reinforces colonial dynamics (Owens, 2017), and hierarchizes Englishes (Morikawa & Parba, 2022). Native-speakerism is still very real to teachers of English in Japan, which results in qualified NNES teachers being excluded from job markets and getting less salaries and other benefits (Oda, 2022; Owens, 2017).

NES or NNES status often intersects with race, gender, and colonial ideology in ways that reinforce White male supremacy and disadvantage minoritized speakers of English (Owens, 2017). For instance, a Black American teacher of English in Korea was expected

[1] Yaya Yao and Wan Jung Amy Lin contributed equally to this paper and share second authorship.

to talk like an American and was seen as acting White when she refrained from using her Black English Vernacular (Maddamsetti & Hinton, 2024). Filipino teachers of English are described as Brown or Half Native English Speaker Teachers (HNESTs) to distinguish them from Native English Teachers, often constructed as White and from Inner Circle countries (Martinez, 2021). Filipino teachers may also be expected to perform gendered and sexualized qualities, such as being friendly, cute, affectionate, and beautiful (Tajima, 2018).

Despite the prevalent native-speakerism, teachers seek creative ways to negotiate their identities and promote equitable English-language education practices. Pedagogical translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, 2021) is an example of this approach. Problematizing the NES/NNES binary, pedagogical translanguaging actively encourages "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 283). In pedagogical translanguaging, teachers and students strive for fluid and creative uses of their full semiotic repertoire, which extends beyond their languages to encompass diverse meaning-making resources, including visuals and gestures.

Pedagogical translanguaging may disrupt colonial ideologies and language hierarchy (Otheguy et al., 2015), embrace students' diverse linguistic practices (de Los Ríos & Seltzer, 2017), reflexively inquire about teachers' and students' lived experiences and emotions (García & Nuonsy, 2024; Tian & Zhang-Wu, 2022), and bring teachers' complex identities to the classroom as pedagogical resources (Jain, 2022; Motha et al., 2012). Rather than modeling the White monolingual NES variety of English as the norm, translanguaging allows teachers to fully draw on their transnational/translingual repertoire to teach for social justice (Charalambous et al., 2020; García, 2020).

Then, how can we, transnational and translingual teachers, turn our experiences and identities into pedagogical resources for social justice? How can we carve out a space where teachers' and students' diverse identities are centered rather than marginalized? In addressing these questions, we draw on the concept of translingual identity-as-pedagogy (Jain, 2022, 2023; Motha et al., 2012; Zheng, 2017). Building on Morgan's (2004) identity-as-pedagogy, Motha and her colleagues (2012) proposed translingual identity-as-pedagogy, which allows teachers to strategically deploy their transnational identities to challenge stereotypes on language learning and use their lived experiences as pedagogical resources. For instance, an Indian teacher of English may bring her expertise in Indian English to challenge linguistic hierarchy, expand students' linguistic repertoire, and invite students to contribute to their transnational and translingual experience (Jain, 2014; Motha et al., 2012). NES teachers may also purposefully disrupt students' stereotypes of monolingual NES by drawing on their experiences (Ishihara et al., 2018). Translingual identity-as-pedagogy creates a space for all participants to share, discuss, and build from their transnational and translingual experiences, rather than belittling them for being or looking like NNESs.

Translingual identity-as-pedagogy allows educators who stand outside of normative expectations to convey non-normative or "freak" hybrid identities as resistance options for students. This facilitates the contesting of deficit monolingual and monocultural ideologies (Jain, 2022) as teachers turn their translingual repertoires into pedagogical resources for social justice. In negotiating their identities, they inevitably experience tensions (Tajeddin & Yazan, 2024) that emerge from various sources, including but not limited to the NES/NNES dichotomy (Nagashima & Lawrence, 2020), homogeneity narratives (Hammine & Rudolph, 2023), and precarity (Kim et al., 2023). While these tensions might be demanding, teachers may strategically adopt a transnational agenda to challenge racialization and marginalization through their pedagogy (Sánchez-Martín, 2024; Thu & Motha, 2021).

However, it takes significant emotion work on the part of teachers to make room for equitable translanguaging. Even though teachers translanguage spontaneously, they may refrain from doing so when they face the pressure to sound like a member of the dominant society (Dovchin & Wang, 2024) and follow institutional rules (Hopkyns & Dovchin, 2024). NNES, who tend to be more vulnerable to negative assumptions about their English skills than NES, may also avoid translanguaging (Nagashima & Lawrence, 2020). Translanguaging intersects with gender and race (Kim & Lee, 2024), so the onus to regulate emotion and come up with strategies to avoid negative assumptions often disproportionately falls on racialized and minoritized teachers. Translanguaging comes with various forms of emotion labor (Benesch, 2017; Nazari & Karimpour, 2023), and it is even more so for teachers from minoritized and racialized backgrounds.

In this article, we explore how three transnational teachers in Japan navigate native-speakerism and translanguage in the pursuit of social justice. While native-speakerism devalues our identities and resources, we draw on our agency (Thu & Motha, 2021) to translanguage in classrooms and turn our identities into pedagogy (Jain, 2022, 2023; Motha et al., 2012). We first lay out the risks and affordances of these translanguaging practices as minoritized teachers, and we share how our racialized and invisiblized experiences shaped and enriched our pedagogical translanguaging for social justice.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Why Trioethnography?

Trioethnography, a form of duoethnography involving three researchers, is a qualitative research methodology that reflects on, juxtaposes, and critically analyzes the participating researchers' lived experiences in dialogue (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, 2015). According to Sawyer and Norris (2013), duoethnography allows researchers to critically understand and (re)interpret their lived experiences through dialogues with critical partners, complicate and contradict their narratives, and reconstruct them with greater depth and nuanced perspectives (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). Through documenting these

dialogic exchanges, duoethnographers not only chronicle their own transformational journeys but also invite readers to engage in similar transformative processes. We chose trioethnography because it is "both a reflection of social justice and a method to advance it" (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 6). Our bodies were the research site and embodiment of our practice (Breault, 2016).

Our dialogue was a critical investigation of and reflection upon our translingual identities and translanguaging. Our research, then, is an advancement of social justice, which offers "narratives of exposure and resistance to dominant discourses" (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 8) and encourages fellow teachers to translanguage for social justice. We saw the potentials of duoethnography from previous scholarship on native-speakerism (Kemaloglu-Er & Lowe, 2022; Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016), intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity, and "native-speaker" status (Hammine & Rudolph, 2023; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020), and teacher identity negotiation (Guo & Sidhu, 2024; Rudolph & Matsuda, 2023)—all of which explored the researchers' embodied practices in dialogue and countered the dominant discourse. Expanding this line of research, we draw on trioethnography to reflect on and advance translanguaging for social justice.

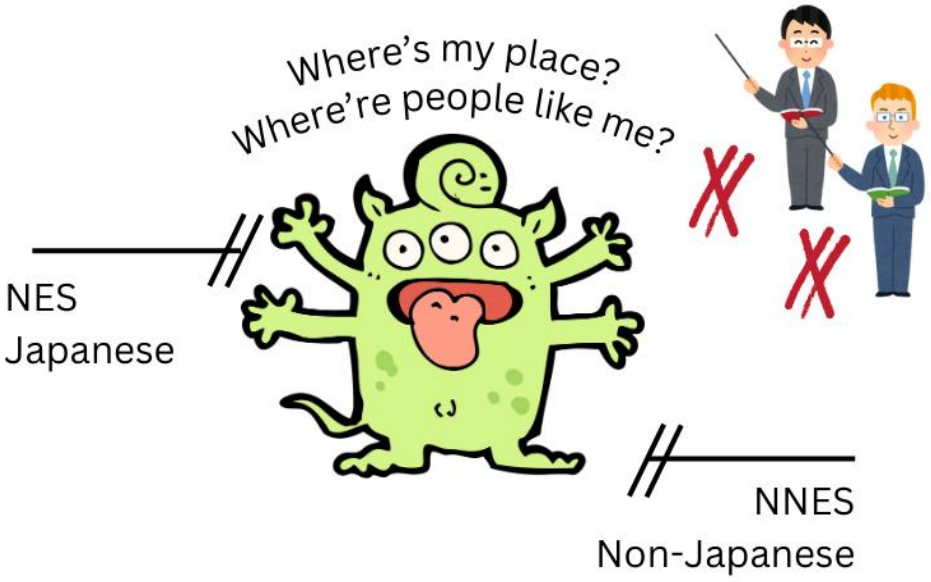
3.2 Our Identities and Positionalities

We are women, multilingual, and non-Japanese Asian English teachers. Two of us identify as NNESs, and one of us as a NES. Among us, one identifies as queer. As such, we are at times perceived as "freaks" in English classrooms in Japan, where ideal English teachers are understood to be White men from Inner Circle countries. Below, we introduce ourselves briefly, along with our privileges and marginalities.

3.2.1 Miso

I am a young Korean woman teacher of English in a Japanese university, speaking Korean, English, and Japanese. After receiving my Ph.D. from a public university in the USA in 2020, I came to Japan and have been teaching since. In Japan, I kept feeling as if I were a "freak," unable to find the right words to explain myself. I refrained from introducing myself as a college professor because I was tired of explaining why I looked young; I was hesitant to talk about my job as I constantly faced this question: "Why do you teach English, not Korean?" I felt like the "freak" in Figure 1 who didn't align with the images of teachers in Japan (top right) and disrupted the binaries between NES/NNES and Japanese/non-Japanese. I had been desperately looking for someone who looked like me—and my dream came true when I met Amy and Yaya.

Figure 1. Miso's Sense of Herself in Japan



I hold both privileged and marginalized positions in Japan. I am privileged to hold a Ph.D. diploma from the USA and have a tenure-track job at the beginning of this study. Meanwhile, I struggle with my status as a non-Japanese, NNES, and young woman in Japan.

3.2.2 Yaya

I am a queer, cis woman of Han Chinese descent born and raised in an upper-middle class family in Tkaronto, colonially referred to as Toronto, Canada. I grew up in Mandarin, Cantonese, English, and French, in roughly that order. I experienced "subtractive bilingualism" upon entering school, as I devoted myself to assimilation and my proficiency in Mandarin and Cantonese plummeted. I worked as an educator in NGOs and schools in Tkaronto and Hong Kong for a decade and then spent another decade in schools and universities in Japan and Thailand.

As a Canadian citizen by birth, I hold Inner Circle privilege as a Canadian passport holder educated in Canada. Speaking a dominant variety of "Canadian English" with what is perceived as a "native English," "Anglo Canadian" accent means that once I explain my citizenship, students and colleagues generally accept my claim to the language. I am also privileged as a cis woman who passes as straight, which impacts my access to employment. I have greater access to community in Japan as I am partnered with a Japanese person and parenting our dual-nationality child, although because it is a queer relationship, our family status is precarious.

3.2.3 Amy

My real name is Wan Jung, also known as Amy. I was born and raised in Taiwan, naturalized in the USA in my 20s, and then moved to Japan to teach English. I always joke that I speak 3.5 languages: Mandarin, English, Japanese, and "half" Taiwanese Hokkien. Due to the complex language ideologies and discrimination in Taiwan, even though my parents spoke Hokkien to each other, they only spoke Mandarin to my sisters and me. I grew up understanding Hokkien but was unable to speak it. My heart language is a mix of Mandarin, English, and Japanese. I've been trying to learn Taiwanese Hokkien recently to find my language identity.

I have been teaching English in Japan for more than ten years, from K-12 to university, starting as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) via the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program, administered by Japan's Ministry of Education. Unlike other ALTs in my city who hold English names officially, my anglicized name, Wan Jung, often caught Japanese teachers and students off guard. I was initially perceived as a "freak"—first because of my name and then appearance. The city Board of Education frequently had to explain to my placement schools that I hold U.S. citizenship and a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Only then would teachers express visible relief.

I utilize my privileges in the English education market in Japan, leveraging my U.S. citizenship and adopted Californian accent. However, my anglicized name still puts me in awkwardness in Japan, where I have to use "Amy" to reassure students and colleagues. I also struggle with my marginalized status as a non-Japanese and the always persistent NNES label.

3.2.4 Our Relationships

We met on November 26th, 2023, while attending presentations on Black teachers in Japan and decolonial approaches to language teaching materials at the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) conference. After the presentations, we sat on a sofa and talked for two hours about our "freakish" lives teaching English to Japanese learners as transnational East Asian women. We shared our frustrations and struggles, and we decided to continue our friendship after the conference. We then met almost once a month on Zoom and shared our unique life journeys, questions, and translingual identities. As we invested our time and energy in the relationship, we empathized with and encouraged each other. Translanguaging helped us find our voice, make sense of our current positionalities, and navigate, as well as take pride in, our translingual identities. We also became more introspective and aware of our privileges and how we exercise them, consciously or not, in our classrooms.

3.3 Data Generation and Analysis

From January to April 2024, over the course of 12 weeks, we engaged in six 2-hour dialogues (henceforth Dialogues 1 to 6) on our translanguaging pedagogies, intersectional identities, experiences of marginalization, and the many emotions stemming from these experiences as minoritized English instructors and researchers in Japan. In preparation for Dialogues 2, 3, 4, and 5, we each crafted narratives that incorporated both writing and images. In the narratives for Dialogues 2 and 3, we each conveyed standout moments drawn from our professional experiences relating to the themes above. We then shifted to connecting these experiences to the literature. In Dialogue 3, we developed a list of relevant and timely articles related to our themes and then each independently selected three to four articles to respond to through written narratives. These narratives connected the literature to our lived experiences, and we crafted these in preparation for Dialogues 4 and 5. After these discussions, we tasked ourselves with refining our working research questions in Dialogue 6, which involved substantive dialogue but also began to look at questions of our research design.

Like many other qualitative methods, our data collection and analysis were concurrent and mutually supportive (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). From Dialogue 7, we refined our research questions and began the process of reviewing the transcripts to identify "hot spots": points of particular tension, resonance, and pertinence. Informed by a Deleuzean framework, hot spots are "the gut feelings, [the] unsettling/uncomfortable, and intense moments" (Carroll, 2022, p. 331) which then "grow, or glow into greater significance than others, and become the preoccupations around which thought and writing cluster" (MacLure, 2013, p. 175). We then crafted a single dialogue for enhanced readability that incorporated the most salient hot spots, excerpting from the Dialogues 1 to 6. In this process, we also iteratively identified and "plugged in" (Carroll, 2022, p. 330) theoretical concepts gleaned from our collaborative literature review process and prior familiarity with the literature to deepen the interpretation of the hot spots in conceptual terms.

We drafted the findings in a dialogue format to represent our voices vividly and highlight how our interactions influenced us over the course of the meetings. The entire trioethnography process transformed us, allowing us to name our experiences and find our voices in the literature. In writing this article, we sincerely wish for other teachers at the margins to experience the transformative power of translanguaging and trioethnography as they navigate diverse challenges and emotion labor. Juxtaposing our experiences in the data and connecting them with theories, we wrote about the risks and affordances of our translingual practices ("Our dialogue" section), along with how our identities and experiences shaped our translanguaging pedagogy ("Our pedagogy" section). We then situated our study in the web of literature ("Discussion" and "Literature review" sections) and drafted suggestions for fellow teachers ("Implications and conclusion" section), subsequently refining our arguments through iterative analysis and discussion.

4. OUR DIALOGUE: RISKS AND AFFORDANCES OF TRANSLANGUAGING AS MINORITIZED AND RACIALIZED TEACHERS IN JAPAN

Miso: When I met both of you for the first time at JALT, I felt I finally found someone who could understand my experience and emotion as a non-Japanese female East Asian teacher of English here in Japan! I have always felt like I was a pseudo-teacher, or, yes, like Yaya said, a "freak." I don't think it was because of linguistic insecurity or low self-esteem reported by translingual teachers in Dovchin and Wang's (2024) study. However, being perceived as a young woman rather than a transnational and trilingual teacher-researcher with a doctorate degree was really something I hadn't expected at all. The onus of proving ourselves is always placed onto us, right? A White guy will gain his authority as soon as he walks into a classroom; but for us, it takes a tremendous amount of effort to get the recognition we deserve. How can we say this, well, East Asian women's burden (pun intended)?

Amy: I've had that kind of experience since working in Japan. Coming to Japan as an ALT, I was "one rank down" compared with other ALTs already and I could see students' attitude change when they dealt with a female ALT, not even mentioning Asian-looking. Initially, I felt great being described as more approachable than other ALTs, but now I wonder if they described me that way because of my gender and appearance, or because of who I really am. I didn't notice that I struggled to establish my teacher identity and authority. For the junior high schools I worked at, they wanted me to be that "approachable" English teacher. On the other hand, I think this image helps me connect with the students. Nevertheless, I noticed that some students don't take me seriously as an English teacher because I am an East Asian woman. Maybe I don't meet their expectations as an English teacher.

Miso: Yes, we are more approachable precisely because we are "one rank down" or "Asian women." It is a great pleasure to build rapport easily with students, but it comes at a price—our struggles to establish teacher identity. Bourdieu (1977) said, "competence implies the power to impose reception" (p. 648). From this perspective, I thought I lacked the competence as a teacher because it was very difficult for me to impose reception. We always have to fight for it.

Amy: Exactly. Because of that, I noticed that I had developed impostor syndrome, where I have to be perfect to prove that I am competent and deserve the job. I don't want to disappoint my students and make them feel they are not getting their money's worth out of the tuition they have paid.

Yaya: That makes me think of Nirmal Puwar's (2004) term "space invaders"; we're "invading" spaces that have been reserved for White men, so we're made to feel like we have to prove ourselves… This goes back to the idea of emotion labor, which is disproportionately laid on marginalized people. But this invasion is a promising transgression. Some students are very invested in the link between Whiteness and the

English language, but I think we all have the potential to come to enjoy the transgression. And as we build trust with them, we can come to enjoy it more and more. It's a rupture in business as usual, an opening, a sense of possibility. The translanguaging dimension of our practice amplifies this transgression. Rather than shy away from it or pretend to fit in, translanguaging helps us revel in it. It's pride in how we are space invaders.

Miso: Yaya, I'd like to add that it took a long time for me to take pride in being a space invader… What helped me at that time was, well, a good theory. I found solace in theory, like how hooks (1994) said: "I saw in theory then a location for healing" (p. 59). The concept of translanguaging helped me see my practice not as a deviation from so-called "native-speaker" norms but as an authentic, rich, and equitable pedagogy. Sometimes we see much more because we are standing at the intersections of different margins, which is called epistemic privilege in feminist standpoint theory (Sweet, 2020). The terms helped me fully embrace who I was—and I think that's the reason why we need to keep theorizing.

Yaya: Yes, I love that asset-based way of understanding our perspectives as marginalized people. The more we can own and share these insights, the more we can transform students' and our own, expectations. Just as we, from a critical pedagogical stance, perceive them as whole beings and not just blank slates to be filled with hegemonic forms of knowledge (Freire, 1970/2000), we can convey ourselves as whole beings (hooks, 1994). We can convey our knowledge as rooted in our embodied experiences, and through this, challenge students' (and our own) assumptions about the body of a student, of a teacher, and of a foreign English teacher.

So, when they see me, as a middle-aged East Asian woman, inhabiting a body that they read as "mother" but taking a role that they would often up to this point assume to be non-East Asian, they're disoriented. They might be disappointed, or confused, or excited. How do they navigate this disorientation, which, as the identity-as-pedagogy (Motha et al., 2012) concept explains, can be a valuable entry point to learning and unlearning? How can I support them in navigating and benefiting from this disorientation? How do I help them make this disorientation productive and liberating, rather than catalyzing retreat or backlash to it? The mere fact of this "altered state" in the translingual English language classrooms can be a great advantage; a productive upending of stereotypical assumptions and prejudices. We can expand the potentials of this altered state through pedagogical integrity and creativity.

Miso: Yaya, I must say that I love your questions, and they also show how deeply you have reflected upon your identities, experiences, and relationships with students.

Amy: Yaya, it's interesting that you used the terms "transgression" and "space invader". I mean, we don't intend to invade or transgress their rules or expectations. However, with awareness or not, the racialized Japanese teens tend to consider English as owned by teachers from the USA or the UK (Matsuda, 2003) and develop stereotypical ideas

towards English teachers based on their experiences in high school (Egitim & Garcia, 2021). I am not sure if both of you noticed, but many universities exclusively feature images of white or black instructors in their promotional materials to attract students. Interestingly, Brown (2019) described it as foreign faculty tokenism, and one of the best examples is the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program run by the Ministry of Education (see also Kubota, 2018). However, I always wonder what students think when they see my anglicized transliteration of a Mandarin name when they register for classes. Do they feel unlucky? Occasionally, I observe expressions of relief among students when I disclose my U.S. citizenship. That confession probably alters students' expectations or gives them a sense of reassurance.

Yaya: So, they might be reassured that you're a real "native speaker" because of your U.S. passport?

Amy: I don't know if students connect nationalities to native speakers or not, but Kubota (2018) discussed this tendency in her book. In Japan, most Japanese people do not argue who native Japanese speakers are because Japan is linguistically, racially, and culturally homogenous, according to nihonjinron[2] discourse (Rakhshandehroo, 2023; Rear, 2017). Nationalism rationalized that "native Japanese speakers are normally Japanese people." Japanese citizenship grants its nationals legitimacy to speak (Kubota, 2018). I wonder if this happened to my students, too. This reminded me that I was called "native sensei" (i.e., "native" teachers) when I was teaching part-time at a high school in the countryside of Japan. The other "native sensei" was from Denmark. I wonder, in the school's definition, if you are not a Japanese teacher of English, then you are a "native sensei". Even though I felt a mismatch in many ways, I was happy to receive the title.

Miso: Amy, you talked about your anglicized name and the passport. Haven't you perhaps felt like you were "borrowing" privilege?

Amy: Definitely. As many Japanese universities still privilege nativeness as determined by nationality (Morikawa, 2019), I know I need to take advantage of my nationality to gain resources and respect in Japan. Have you had similar experiences, too?

Miso: Whenever my authority as an English teacher is called into question in Japan, I say I have a Ph.D. from a university in the USA. "The USA" is crucial here. What counts is not my hard work devoted to the Ph.D., but the fact that the diploma was issued from the USA. Every time I do that, I feel as if I were an Asian-looking doll with a "made in USA" tag, trying to borrow a privilege that's not my own. Occasionally, we are propelled

[2] Ninhonjinron is a dominant identity discourse on the concept of Japaneseness emphasizing its exceptionalism. Meanwhile, postwar Japanese economic growth also drew attention from Western countries, eventually advancing a discourse around Japanese success and uniqueness (Befu, 2001). As a hegemonic ideology in Japanese education, politics, economics, language policies, and so forth, it also relates to the idea that Japan is monoracial and monolingual. Nihonjinron discourse is in keeping with a conflation of ethnicity, language, and nationality that is in keeping with native-speakerism.

to distance ourselves from our very own racial identities because there is a racialized linguistic hierarchy (Motha et al., 2012). Haven't you perhaps felt that you were a freak pretending to be someone else?

Yaya: This goes back to Amy's discussion of impostor syndrome, and the ways that White supremacist patriarchy contributes to the dynamics of this problem. We claim privilege for access to employment, and at the same time we are trying to question that. It's easy to fall into guilt cycles when we're very critical and attuned to unearned privilege, while we have to "play the game" to a certain extent to gain access in our field.

Miso: On the flip side, I sometimes feel my students appreciate the "freakishness" of me. Well, they just feel much easier to approach me. In my first years of teaching in Japan, I got embarrassed when my students told me *kawaii* (i.e., cute) (Kim & Lee, 2024), but now I see that *kawaii* is much better than *kowai* (i.e., scary). A number of my students find it *kowai* to talk to non-Japanese people in English, and I totally see that. But in my class, I just look like my students, and they know I always draw on translingual resources. Just yesterday, I taught a class that included English, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish. We compared the collocations of *kawaii* (Japanese), cute (English), and *gwiyeopda* (Korean) to discuss cultural differences. Of course my students loved it! We always cross linguistic boundaries and celebrate our translingual practices, and that's the beauty of teaching as a "freak", I think.

Amy: Yaya, I feel sad when you said that we claim our privileges, yet we also question them. That is so true. We enjoy being the approachable teachers in the classroom, but we also question the racialized existence in our classrooms. Miso, your example aligns with the concept of co-learning, which redefines the traditional role of teachers and learners (Li, 2023). Instead of being "dispensers and receptacles of knowledge," as Brantmeier (2013, p. 97) described, they become "joint sojourners" collaboratively seeking knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Your lesson not only breaks students' unconscious bias about English class and English teachers, but it also includes students' linguistic identities in the classroom. In your case, it gave students the opportunity to understand your translingual identity. I feel that our presence, as educators who defy stereotypical perceptions of language teachers, of course, disorients students, but that opens up topics. Students approach me to discuss politics, immigration, history, sexuality, gender issues, social problems, religion, and other topics. One student expressed that he enjoyed discussing politics with me because he could enjoy learning with me, not from me. Aronin (2017) contended:

> A philosophy of multilingualism addresses not so much language itself, but primarily the acquisition and use of two or more languages, the environments of such use and acquisition, and the associated patterns and imperatives. Its distinctiveness and potential is intrinsically multidisciplinary. (p. 184)

This helped me navigate the complex interplay of identities and multidisciplinary perspectives in my classroom. I see myself not solely as an English instructor but as a speaker looking for opportunities to learn with others.

4.1 Miso's Translanguaging Pedagogy

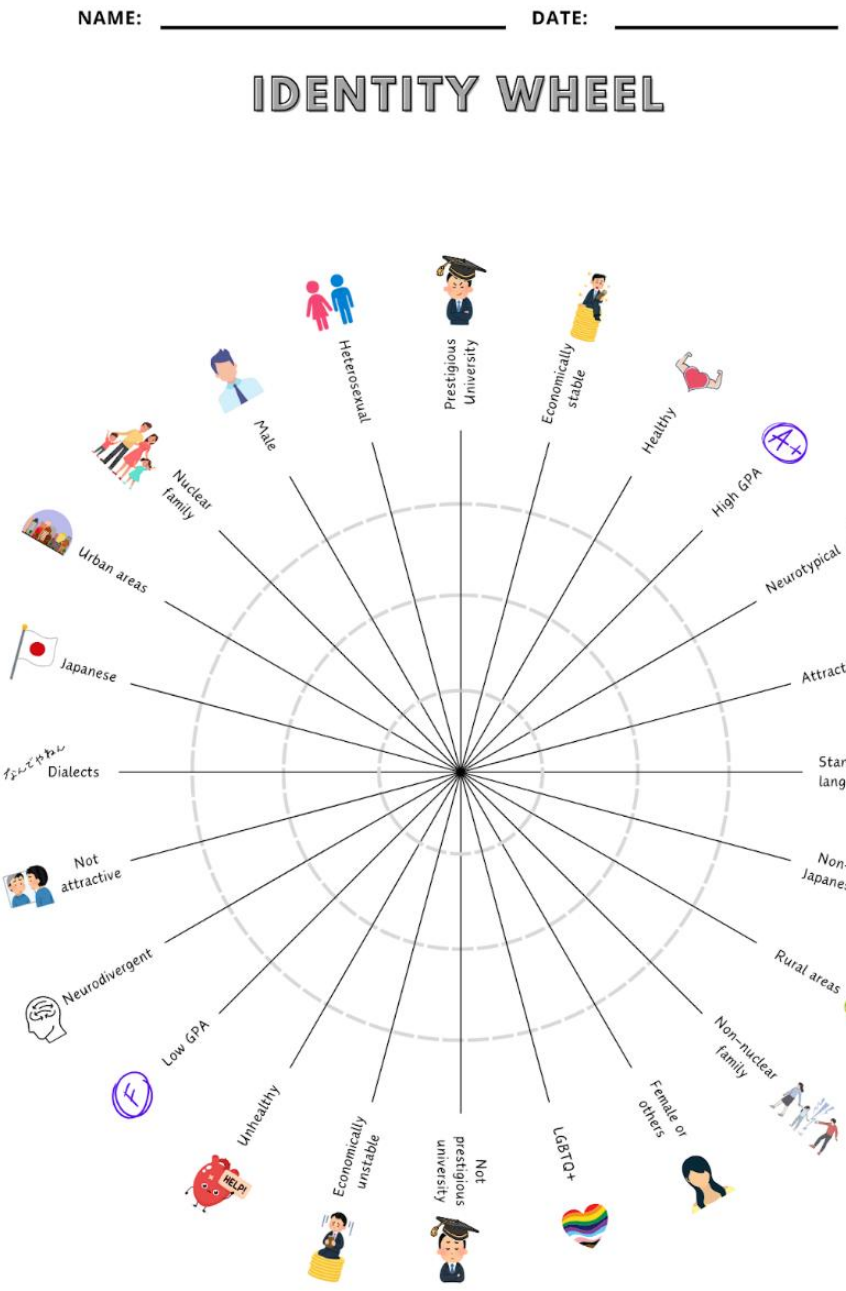
The dialogue was a space for me to seek solace in theory (hooks, 1994), name and interpret my identities and lived experiences (Kim & Lee, 2024), and build solidarity and rapport with Amy and Yaya. Throughout the dialogue with Amy and Yaya, I reflected on why I felt as if I were a "freak" and in what ways I would be able to turn this "freakishness" into approachable and equitable translanguaging practices in my teaching. Specifically, I try to represent people with diverse identities and backgrounds and draw on students' entire linguistic repertoire.

First, I try to engage my students with materials that directly tackle native-speakerism and represent diverse speakers of English in Japan and abroad. In the beginning of the semester, my students and I have a discussion on what it means to be good and bad speakers of English using McCusker and Cohen's (2021) article on nonnative speakers of English. We relate our experiences with Chimamanda Adichie's TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009) and reflect upon how stereotypes influence us (see Kim 2023 for more details). In the latter part of the semester, we watch a short documentary titled "Living while Black, in Japan" (Fukada & Bedford, 2021) and discuss the lives of minoritized people. As we practice English with these materials, we come to accept our "non-native" English positively and learn about diversity both in and out of Japan.

Second, I encourage all students to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire and learn from diverse speakers of Englishes around the world. In my classroom, I always use Korean, Japanese, English, Kansai-ben (i.e., a Japanese dialect unique to the Kansai area), and digital resources including Canva (an interactive platform for doing classroom activities with students), TED, and YouTube. I also encourage my students to draw on their full semiotic repertoire, such as creating picture books, comparing Kansai-ben with so-called standard Japanese, and making language identity maps.

One such example is the final presentation activity. Figure 2 is an identity wheel I developed based on the activity by Nam et al. (2020) and tailored to suit my students' backgrounds. I first demonstrate how to use it by using my identities. For instance, I say: "I am obviously a non-Japanese, but I don't stand out too much, so I'll mark myself about here (i.e., the second concentric circle, on a line between "Japanese" and "non-Japanese")." I repeat it several times with other axes, and ask students to do the same. At this time, I strongly stress that they do not need to mark every line because some students may feel uncomfortable doing so. After students mark their dots on the wheel, we do a series of small speaking/writing activities (e.g., finding someone who's similar to themselves by asking questions and writing about the similarities and differences between themselves).

Figure 2. Miso's Identity Wheel Activity



For the final presentation, they need to choose a speech by a speaker who is at least three axes opposite to themselves. For instance, if a student is "Japanese" "able-bodied" and from a "nuclear family," they need to choose a speech by someone who is not Japanese and able-bodied, and not from a nuclear family. They choose two minutes of the speech, practice delivering it using various tools (e.g., Microsoft Reading Coach), and make discussion questions based on the speech.

This translanguaging pedagogy transforms my "freakishness" into pedagogical resources. Throughout the course, the students reflect on their linguistic repertoire and their identities, developing critical awareness and competence to interact with diverse speakers from around the world.

4.2 Yaya's Translanguaging Pedagogy

As the dialogue above reflects, I was energized to be able to name collectively the ways that we are centering and celebrating our funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) through our translingual practice as educators. Although I grew up in a translanguaging home, it wasn't until far into my career that I learned about translanguaging. When I did, I felt a sense of relief (Yao, 2024) that there was a framework for regarding my linguistic resources in an asset-based way. Professionally, I was excited to be able to refer to the translanguaging literature as a rationale for an emancipatory approach to (language and social justice) education.

As a justice-oriented language educator, translanguaging or translingual arts-based pedagogy (TABP) is now key to my teaching philosophy. My grounding in TABP is rooted in a decolonial (Tuck & Yang, 2012) stance that values lived experience and "felt knowledge" as essential to "a more complex telling" (Million, 2009, p. 54). This is because of the learner and educator funds of knowledge that translanguaging honors, as well as the affective benefits of the arts, both of which center on felt and cultural knowledge. Felt knowledge is embodied and affective knowledge that has traditionally been marginalized in formal education in favor of the cognitive and the textual (Kalantzis & Cope, 2009). The connection between translanguaging and the arts is intuitive because translanguaging is not limited to language, but encompasses the range of semiotic resources (Li, 2022). The arts, too, synthesize and play across this range, facilitating multimodal forms for the expression of embodied and affective ways of knowing. Translingual arts-based approaches work to ensure that students and practitioners can draw on their semiotic resources in more exploratory and personally grounded ways. These approaches support students to engage with the act of learning a language, and with learning English specifically, in an agentic way, rooted in their exploration of self.

With the focus firmly on creativity and communication rather than proficiency, translanguaging arts-based pedagogy can contribute to a more collaborative and trusting environment. Learners have expressed that they greatly value the ways in which the approach allows them to connect and interact with the ideas and creative expressions of their peers. This community-building aspect of the pedagogical stance resists an increasingly neoliberal framing of education that fosters competition and an instrumentalist orientation to language skills.

They have also expressed appreciation for opportunities for reflexivity through translanguaging arts-based pedagogy. One multilingual student in her 20s, "Bela" (a pseudonym), explained how she had never had the chance to think deeply about her linguistic identities before, and how this process facilitated her embracing of her linguistic repertoire from an asset-based perspective (personal communication, Feb 19, 2023). Through the multimodal and holistic nature of arts-based reflection, learners can generate personally grounded metacognitive and meta-affective understandings of the themes. Bela had also been doubtful that she could create and perform a poem about these identities and went on to surprise herself. This process as a whole, then, developed her sense of agency as a multilingual and creator, and as such a sense of affirmation at multiple levels.

In general, there are multiple ways in which learners can benefit from translanguaging arts-based pedagogy, and the key impacts that are consistently echoed are its positive impacts on relationality, reflexivity, and agency. These elements can lay the foundation for broader conversations around systemic oppression and social justice that are grounded in lived experience.

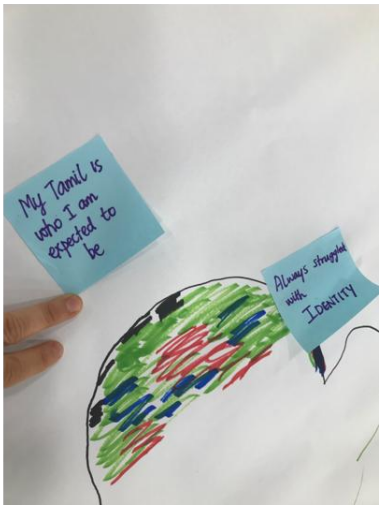
Figure 3. Writing Prompts and Bela's Arts-based Reflection

Writing prompts

- My [Japanese/English/Korean/Chinese/ …] is…(Seltzer, 2020) / is not…
- My name is… / My name is not…
- Call me… / Don't call me…
- [They] call me…
- My [nose / liver / leg/ gut / fists / feet …] is/are / My [body part] is not …

Bela's arts-based reflection

Smaller detail from Bela's arts-based reflection



4.3 Amy's Translanguaging Pedagogy

I found that I struggled more with my identities after coming to Japan. How I understood myself didn't fit teachers' and students' expectations as English teachers in Japan, so I needed to explain and prove myself to find my position. I felt I was constantly rejected for who I am. The "exotic" or "foreign-looking" English teachers didn't have to explain themselves. That was when studies of translanguaging, anti-racism, and critical pedagogy came into place as I searched for answers. I started to question what's taken for granted, and I wanted my students to think. This led to my teaching of critical thinking and using an inquiry-based approach. Later, when I met Miso and Yaya, our skepticism also helped me to articulate my hurt and observations, leading me to develop my courses.

Specifically, I had the freedom to develop a course by myself on social justice addressing stereotypes and discrimination from 2023. The course was eight weeks long and covered the following themes: 1) justice, discrimination, and diversity; 2) the concept of identity and how those in power weaponize it to create privilege, marginalization, discrimination, and inequality; 3) linguistic and national diversity in Japan, challenging the perception of Japan as monolingual and monoracial; 4) potential cultural conflicts that arise while fostering diversity; 5) gender inequality perpetuated by stereotypes embedded in cultural norms; 6) microaggressions in everyday life that reflect inequality and exclusion from the intersections of the above factors (Jana & Baran, 2020). The course concluded with student interviews with people whose stories illustrate social injustice. The final lesson discussed equality, equity, empowerment, and self-care.

The challenge of teaching these topics was that many students had not had a chance to question what has been passed down from schools or families. Whatever makes sense to them may not make sense to me, and I feel responsible for asking why in the classroom. Therefore, we started by talking about definitions. I asked them to use their English to describe or define, for example, justice, discrimination, stereotypes, diversity, freedom of religion, etc. Many of them wrote in their reflections that they had never thought deeply about the meaning of these words. If this course was held in Japanese, they might have provided textbook answers. However, defining these concepts in English forced them to draw on their linguistic recourses and personal experiences to articulate and clarify deeper social concepts. That helped them to rethink their preconceptions.

Another approach is discussion and question-posing. Questions are powerful as questioning stimulates critical thinking (Lin, 2021). Kawamoto (2014) asserted that misconceptions arise when people stop using critical thinking skills and suggested that a healthy sense of skepticism and a habit of questioning can be helpful in preventing disillusionment. However, even if teachers use good discussion questions to challenge students' unconscious biases, students tend to answer teachers' questions by memory recall for "standard answers" carried out from their cultural baggage. It requires sequential follow-up questions to dig deeper into the topic with students (Lin, 2021). For example, in class, I usually show two to three questions on the same slide, usually

sequential, for students to think deeper and move away from their cultural baggage. Very often, I have to walk around the classroom to ask clarification or follow-up questions by saying, "When you said this, did you mean…?" "How about (another idea)?" Further, I encourage students to pose their own questions about difficult topics. At the end of the lesson, as students reflect on the class content, they are also required to pose discussion questions for the next class.

Further, I also incorporate pictures and ask students to describe the pictures, and then interpret and evaluate their messages. For example, for a lesson on gender equality, I used an advertisement with a younger girl doing her skincare routine and the imperative expression: "Do this to boost your *joshiryoku*[3] (i.e., feminine skills) in your 20s." The students discussed where they see such posters, what kind of message it is conveying, and what they think about the message. Coupled with the definition activity, some groups had heated discussions about what *joshiryoku* suggests about Japanese society and why there isn't such a term as *danshiryoku* (i.e., masculine skills).

The final example focuses on language discrimination in the USA, providing a comparison to the situation in Japan. Demonstrating language discrimination, especially from an immigrant perspective, is not easy for my Japanese students to grasp, so I show them a TED Talk from Karen Leung (2018), "Embracing Multilingualism and Eradicating Linguistic Bias." In her talk, the speaker asks a few thought-provoking questions, for example, "Why was it so important for me to speak 'perfect English'? Does my proficiency in one language really define my intelligence?" It is easy for students to agree that language proficiency does not define one's intelligence. However, when I change the question to, "Why was it so important for immigrants in Japan to speak perfect Japanese?" it starts to help them think about whether or not they have that expectation or bias that immigrants in Japan speak "perfect Japanese," "use honorific form perfectly," "without any accent," to be considered educated. Then, I used my own experiences and my students' examples to discuss linguistic bias in Japan.

As I am fighting with stereotypes and unconscious biases dictated by political, economic, and cultural ideologies, I need to find effective ways to "pose […] problems" (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 108), framing them in ways that allow students to rethink their beliefs. As we discussed my "freakishness" in society, the students are given opportunities to be liberated from the imposed values and cultural baggage. The translanguaging approaches enable them to be critical and reflect on their positioning in society.

[3] *Joshiryoku*, or feminine skills in Japanese, are expectations of how girls and women should think, act, and perform in society. It was first coined in 1980's fashion magazines, implying young women should hone their feminine skills by "taking care" of their appearance and improving domestic skills. Even though there is a tendency in recent years to encourage young men to develop *joshiryoku*, i.e., to spend more time on grooming and domestic tasks, for example, it upholds the idea that these behaviors or skills define femininity.

5. DISCUSSION

Our dialogue demonstrates the risks and benefits of translanguaging as racialized and minoritized teachers, and our translanguaging pedagogies illustrate how our invisibilized identities could be interpreted and transformed into pedagogical practices. Below, we discuss our findings further based on the two research questions. Our first question inquired into the risks and affordances of translanguaging for us as "freak" and invisibilized foreign English teachers in Japan, where White male Inner Circle (Kachru, 1992) status is the norm. First of all, our exploration shows that translanguaging intersects with teachers' identities and power. In his discussion of power and language, Bourdieu (1977) noted: "Some persons are *not in a position to speak* (e.g., women) or must *win* their audience, whereas others effortlessly command attention" (p. 650, italics in original). Likewise, we occasionally felt that our position did not allow us to translanguage; if we did, we would have to win our audience. We always had to prove that our translanguaging was not a sign of our incompetence but a strategic pedagogical practice (Nagashima & Lawrence, 2020; Nazari & Karimpour, 2023) by drawing on a Ph.D. diploma from the USA (Miso) and a USA passport (Amy). Translanguaging is never neutral; the onus to prove our "English authenticity" fell on us.

Second, our perceived "freakishness"—stemming from our ethnicities, nationalities, NES/NNES status, and gender—left us with a significant amount of emotion labor (Benesch, 2017) and impostor syndrome (Bernat, 2008). Our pedagogical practices involved transgressing the predefined borders of NES/NNES and invading the space reserved for White men (Puwar, 2004). Invading this space, we felt isolated, anxious, or even inadequate, exacerbated by our status as migrants to Japan and, at the same time, complicated by our ethnicities that allow us, to a superficial extent, to "pass" as Japanese. As workers in the English industrial complex, our stratification as NES and NNES, as "foreign" or "Japanese," serves to divide and rule in classic terms. Finding no place within the binaries, we had to suppress the feelings of being impostors (Bernat, 2008). Additionally, as our female bodies were often read as "motherly" or even "cute," we were oftentimes expected to act as such (Tajima, 2018). This racialized and gendered emotion labor was an invisible yet taxing component of our translanguaging.

Meanwhile, our dialogue demonstrates the affordances of our "freakish" identities. Our identities and bodies disrupt the notion of equating a single race with a nation or language as soon as we walk into our classrooms. When our students see us, they might feel disoriented and confused if they assume English teachers to be stereotypical NES; however, we help students learn from the disorientation by challenging the homogeneity narrative (Hammine & Rudolph, 2023) and celebrating our and our students' unique ways of speaking English. Even though our female bodies and appearances often marginalized us, we could build rapport with our students and make ourselves more approachable, opening up and sharing our translingual experiences with them more easily. In sum, our "freakish" identities allowed us opportunities to disrupt monolithic ideologies, and we could use translanguaging as a pedagogical tool to inform and inspire

our students. Through this approach, we aim to empower them to voice and champion their marginalized identities.

Our second research question asked how our experiences as "freak" and invisibilized foreign teachers inform and enrich our pedagogical translanguaging for social justice. Our exploration showed that our translanguaging practices intersected with how we interpret our identities. Miso consistently incorporates all members' (including her own) linguistic repertoires to create materials. She also uses the intersectionality wheel to help students understand their identities. Yaya practices a translanguaging arts-based pedagogy to promote creativity and self-expression over proficiency. Through this philosophy, she builds a collaborative and trusting relationship in the classroom to promote social justice. Amy turns her struggles and reflections into lessons. She incorporates images and videos to engage students with social issues in Japan. She encourages students to ask questions, urging them not to stay in their comfort zones but to stay skeptical of commonly accepted ideas.

Our translanguaging pedagogy demonstrates that our minoritized and racialized identities and experiences provide fertile ground for our students' English-language learning for social justice. Teachers' strategic deployment of their translingual identities opens up opportunities for students to learn about the diversity of English, unlearn deep-seated stereotypes, and use their linguistic repertoires creatively, all of which lead to deconstructing and transcending the native/nonnative binary (Jain, 2022; Motha et al., 2012; Zheng, 2017). Throughout this process, the teachers co-learn (Brantmeier, 2013) with the students, collaboratively affirming our diversity and exploring the potentials of translanguaging.

We could take pride in our translanguaging pedagogy because we were able to reflect on, interpret, and analyze our experiences together in this trioethnography. Given the concurrently social (i.e., in contact with many people) and isolated (usually the only teacher in the room) nature of teaching (Hanks, 2017), it is essential for our mental health to build collegial relationships and networks (Lyra et al., 2003). Our reflections emphasized how essential it is to be able to reflect on the specificities of social location with those who share similar experiences. Through connections with other justice-oriented educators, especially those whose positionalities intersect with ours, we can make meaning of our practice in liberatory and transformative ways (Sister Scholars, 2023). This aligns with critical pedagogical theory, which supports us in understanding our seemingly individual experiences in a sociopolitical context. This contextualizing helps us flesh out the intersectional ways in which "the personal is political" and offer each other mutual support in facing the challenges of systemic oppression. As such, fostering solidaristic networks across imposed categories is an inherent challenge to systemic oppression. We must continually attend to these connections as we strive not only to survive but to imagine and build new ways of relating with each other and the world around us.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Our dialogical process brought home the ways in which translanguaging, as East Asian teachers invading the "white space" of English teaching in Japan, is no easy task. At the same time, we experience joy and reward from our experiences of transgression and our diverse connections with students. Based on our trioethnography, we suggest that one trans rights movement slogan, "My body is my message," could resonate with minoritized and racialized teachers who wish to turn their identities into pedagogy. Trans scholarship offers the idea of "embracing the 'freak' body" (Fahs, 2023, p. 145), and we relate to this goal as racialized, gendered educators in the Japanese English language teaching context. To a certain extent, minoritized teachers' "invasion" of this "white space" (Anderson, 2015) is a message in and of itself. Negotiating the dynamics of this invading is a fluid, everyday reality. The emotion labor that this dance entails is layered and loaded. When the emotion labor load gets heavy, we suggest practicing self-care proactively, as Audre Lorde (1988/2020) wrote: "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (p. 157). To be sustainable, this self-preservation also involves overcoming impostor syndrome to regard our funds of knowledge as (more than) enough.

Our trioethnography implies that translanguaging is a powerful entry point for critical reflexivity on our holistic linguistic repertoires. We must keep our critical reflexivity to support our students, colleagues, and communities by being transparent about the ways in which we experience marginalization and privilege because our intersectional social location shapes us as we translanguage for social justice. Critical reflexivity enriches our pedagogical translanguaging and supports nuanced integration with approaches such as the intersectionality wheel, arts-based pedagogy, and inquiry approaches. The social justice orientation of translanguaging allows educators to recognize learners' and educators' diverse semiotic resources and translingual experiences as assets. The concept of a holistic repertoire can also facilitate critical awareness of the sociopolitical dynamics between the various elements of the repertoire.

As we continue to navigate native-speakerism while dealing with the precarities of the labor market and the broader context of the marketization of education, what is clearer than ever is that the answers are not either-or. By embracing our "freak" bodies and lived experiences, we can bring ourselves more fully into the spaces we inhabit. When anchored in the bodies and lived experiences of students and teachers, translanguaging instruction offers entry points into critical dialogues around social justice. How can our intersectional understandings of our own experiences of privilege and marginalization enhance our translingual instructional strategies, and vice versa, to highlight the connections between the personal and the political in the language teaching context? The more we are able to center, celebrate, and reflect on our students' and our own translingual funds of knowledge, the more we work towards "critical translanguaging spaces" (Hamman, 2018; Li, 2011) that constitute an inherent challenge to native-speakerism.

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